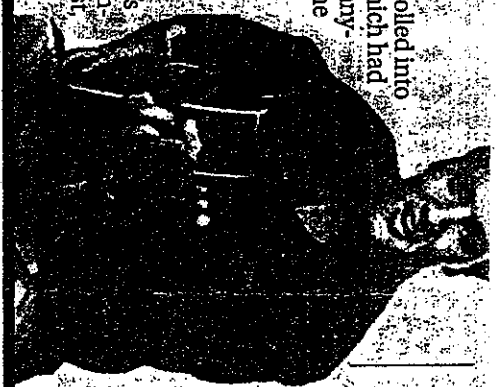


January 4, 2003

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Today in history

On this day in 1954, Elvis Presley strolled into the Memphis Recording Service, which had the motto, "We record anything — anywhere — anytime," and put \$4 on the counter. He recorded "Casual Love" and "I'll Never Stand in Your Way," two songs that impressed record executive Sam Phillips enough that he had Elvis record his first professional sides for Sun Records the following July. The recording, "That's All Right (Mama)," debuted on Memphis radio two days later and the rest, as they say, is history.



Almanac

Today's chuckle

Shrink-wrap: psychiatrist's overcoat.

Today's birthdays

Oscar-winning actress Jane Wyman, 89, Heisman-winning Notre Dame star Johnny Lujack, 78; former Miami Dolphins coach Don Shula, 74; former boxing champ Floyd Patterson, 73; actress Dyan Cannon, 66; R.E.M. singer Michael Stipe, 43; "Newsradio" and "The Kids in the Hall" star Dave Foley, 41.

The quote

"I'm looking forward to raising a glass of single malt to the memory of the professor and in fellowship with fans around the world."

Chris Cawley, chairwoman of the British Tolkien Society, who celebrated author J.R.R. Tolkien's "eleventy-first" birthday.

Horn soloist lifts ESO in Mozart, Bach pieces

BY BARBARA VITELLO

Daily Herald Staff Writer

Who needs a violin when you have a French horn?

Acclaimed horn soloist Eric Ruske answered that question Friday when he joined the Elgin Symphony Orchestra to perform his remarkable transcribed version of Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor as well as Mozart's Concerto in E-flat for Horn and Orchestra.

The violin and piano may dominate the solo repertoire, but Ruske made an eloquent argument for the French horn in his memorable performance demonstrating how nimble an instrument it can be in the

hands of a skilled musician.

The French horn colored the piece in a new, inspiring way, giving it a pleasantly melancholy timbre.

Like other Baroque compositions, the concerto moves constantly, offering the virtuoso an excellent showcase.

Ruske met the challenge, displaying stamina and control without sacrificing notes or nuance in a demanding piece that satisfies the listener's intellect and aesthetic sensibility.

Webern's exceptionally orchestrated version of a Bach fugue from "The Musical Offering" followed, made more enjoyable by conductor Robert Hanson's thorough explanation to the audience of this intriguing work.

The brass section bears mentioning. Having disappointed audiences in recent ESO concerts, the horns rebounded, performing boldly and confidently.

After the intermission, Ruske rejoined the orchestra for Mozart's brief but satisfying horn concerto boasting the composer's trademark elegance and lyricism.

It was a pleasure to hear this rich, warm instrument take center stage and in such a fine composition, with its deceptively simple second movement and its jolly allegro setting the French horn in its familiar role as sounding the call to the hunt.

The evening began, serenely, with Wagner's gorgeous "Siegfried Idyll," composed as a birthday and Christmas present for his wife and named for their son.

The performance concluded on a literary note, with the full orchestra playing Strauss' "Don Juan," inspired by literature's most famous womanizer.

The ESO, so adept at breathing life into a tone poem, did so again, balancing the music's majestic virility, fiery conquests and bittersweet romance.

Ruske and the ESO perform at 8 p.m. today and 3:30 p.m. Sunday at the Hennepin Theater, 150 Dexter Court, Elgin. (847) 888-4000.

Eric Ruske, a La Grange native, was the ESO's French horn soloist Friday.

